

NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

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USDA ANNOUNCES NEW MINORITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

BIG ISLAND, Hawaii, Feb. 3, 2004— USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Bruce Knight today announced two new minority pilot scholarship programs that will be offered in 2004.

"These scholarship opportunities help attract outstanding students from underrepresented groups to pursue careers in agriculture and natural resource sciences. Through workforce planning and scholarship programs, we are creating a more effective government by attracting and educating students from diverse backgrounds to be quality employees by ensuring that they have the skills to perform at high levels," Knight said during the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting being held here.

The new pilot Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Scholarship Program will offer scholarships to U.S. citizens who are seeking a degree in agriculture or related natural resource sciences at universities with high percentages of Asian and Pacific Islander students in California, Hawaii, Minnesota and the Pacific Basin Area. The new Tribal Scholarship Program pilot will have similar eligibility requirements and will be available to students at 1994 Tribal Land Grant Colleges.

Currently, NRCS participates in two USDA sponsored scholarship programs: the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program for students planning to attend an 1890 Historically Black Land Grant Institution and major in agriculture or natural resource related studies; and the Public Service Leaders Scholarship, which is a collaborative effort between USDA, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the Hispanic College Fund, Inc.

These scholarship programs will provide full tuition, employment, employee benefits, fees, books, use of a personal computer and software while on scholarship, and room and board each year for up to four years. In addition to general eligibility criteria, each scholarship may have unique features due to differences in the target institutions or communities.

Information on the new scholarship programs will be available soon at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or from Larry Holmes, NRCS Outreach Division Director, at 301-504-2229 or larry.holmes2@usda.gov. Information on the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program is at <http://1890Scholars.program.usda.gov>. Information on the Public Service Leaders Scholarship is at <http://www.hsi.usda.gov/Scholars/main.htm>.

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